62

Ca

"Make a Hobby of Hardy Sempervivums"

Mac Pherson Gardens

2920 STARR AVE · OREGON 16, OHIO

LIBRARY
RECEIVED
★ JAN 23 1961 ★
U. S. Department of Agriculture

1961 COLLECTION OF SEMPERVIVUMS • 10 for $4.00

- Albidum
- Alpestre (C)
- Alpha
- Alpinum
- Ambergreen
- Arachnoideum
- Atropurpureum
- Barbulatum
- Belladonna
- Betta
- Blandum (C)
- Blood Tip
- Braunii
- Bungeanum
- Boutignyanum
- Calcareum
- Cantalicum
- Ciliatun Rubrum
- Clara Noyes
- Clemanum
- Cleveland Morgan
- Clusianna
- Compte DeCongae
- Dolomiticum
- Dolomiticum (C)
- Engles 13-2
- Engles Rubrum
- Elegans
- Fimbriatum
- Flagelliforme
- Fontanae
- Gamma
- Globiferum
- Greenii
- Hausmanni
- H. Celon
- Hillebrandtii (C)
- Hirtum
- Hispidulum
- Histoni
- Kindingeri (C)
- Kochi
- Kosininii
- Laggeri
- Laharpei (C)
- LaHarple
- Lamottei
- Latifolium
- Longifolium
- Longobordum
- Lowns 60
- Mauvine
- Mettenianum
- Minto's Seedling
- Mitchell's Seedling
- Moggridgei
- Montanum
- Morrelianum
- Neilreichii (C)
- Nigrum (C)
- No. 37
- Pallidum
- Penniculatum
- Pittonii
- Powellii
- Purdy's 1-18
- Purdy's 50-5
- Purdy's 50-6
- Purdy's 60-1
- Purdy's 60-2
- Purdy's 70-40
- Purdy's 90-2
- Purple Beauty
- Pyrenaicum
- Queen Amalea
- Rhodanicum
- Robustum
- Rubicundum
- Rubra Ash
- Rubra Ray
- Rubrum-Borsch
- Ruthenicum
- Sabanum
- Sanford Hybrid
- Sanfordii
- Siebenbergen
- Silverine
- Soboliferum (C)
- Speciosium
- Tectorum
- Triste
- Verlotii
- Violaceum
- Wards No. 2
- Wulfenii

60¢ EACH

- Reginae-Amaliae

75¢ EACH

- Spinosa
  (a form of Umbilicus)

Sempervivum Culture

All species will grow in ordinary soil, in full sun, shade or half-shade if given good drainage, however all forms change their characteristics when grown in dense shade, and very rich soils. We find the best results are obtained by using soil moderately enriched with leafmold.

The flowering plants disappear after blooming but their place is soon filled by the offsets. They can be transplanted at any growing season. Sempervivum attain their full color in May and June. When the hot weather comes, the color starts to fade; and they take on their summer color which is less brilliant.

Visitors are welcomed to the nurseries, week days after 4:30 P.M. and by appointment Saturdays and Sundays.

USE LIST AS ORDER BLANK

(LIST will be returned with your order)

MARK YOUR NEEDS

- Albidum
- Alpestre (C)
- Alpha

YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS:

(please print) NAME

STREET OR R. F. D. AND P. O. BOX

CITY ZONE STATE

SEMPERVIVUMS

LIBRARY
RECEIVED
★ JAN 23 1961 ★
U.S. Department of Agriculture

By C. W. WOOD

There are at least two ways of getting pleasure out of sempervivums, or houseleeks, as you prefer: One from the standpoint of the collector, and the other from that of the gardener. That there is pleasure to be had from them — pleasure of high degree, in fact — will be apparent after you get your first houseleek, study its many intriguing facets, and use it in felicitous surroundings in your garden. Either approach will, I think, lead to one of the most entrancing hobbies in gardening. First of all, though, to get your feet on firm ground, let us examine a few of the aspects of the genus as they appear to the botanist.

Your very first impression, after you commence to investigate the subject will be, and rightly so, that confusion reigns supreme in the naming of the plants. That is not to be wondered at, either, because even the best authorities are at wide variance in their conclusions. Thus, the Cyclopedia of Horticulture, the bible of many American gardeners, tells us there are "about 63 species in the mountains of the Old World," while Praeger, a recent monographer of the genus admits only about half that number of distinct kinds. One is not surprised then to find confusion in gardeners' interpretations of the different kinds.

The best advice, I believe, to anyone with an awakening interest in sempervivums is to tell them to disregard names, unless the vendor is known to be an authority on the plants, and rely more upon sight or careful description in choosing one's purchases. Although that might work a hardship on a few careful commercial growers, it would work to the advantage of specialists like MacPherson Gardens, where such meticulous care is taken to have everything right. If plants are bought on appearance or careful descriptions, there will be far less duplication and, therefore, far more pleasure for the gardener.

The idea expressed by many unthinking gardeners that all sempervivums look much alike has no doubt had some influence in giving the plants a poor reputation in some quarters; actually, nothing could be farther from the truth, as you will see by examining a representative group. There you will find a greater diversity in leafage, including size, shape and coloring, and size and shape of rosette, as we shall see later. At one time, there were more than 300 distinct kinds in this garden (mostly seedlings to be sure)—but not distinct because of the presence or absence of a few hairs on leaf or stem, which is often made the basis of a botanist's decision, but easily distinguished, and consequently usable for different purposes in the garden.

Their differences lay in size of rosette (from the tiny cobwebbed Fauconnettii to the tectorum forms known in gardens as Atroviolaceum, with rosettes ten inches or more across, and an all-green form, under label of Emerald Giant, which I saw some time ago, growing in rich soil in part shade, that was close to fifteen inches across), color of leaf (and endless variations in greens, reds, purples and intermediate shades and combinations), shape of leaf and rosette, and many other characteristics which make plants exactly suited to certain situations and associations. Nothing could be farther from the truth, then, than the assumption that all sempervivums are much alike, and one can enter the pleasant task of collecting them with the assurance their great dissimilarity will provide many a happy moment in the years to come.

At the very outset, though, one should disabuse his mind of any idea that the plants can get along with grace on next to nothing in the way of care. There is evidence in the literature to support the statement that "it is difficult to kill them," but there is a vast difference in the amount of satisfaction one can get from a well-cared-for plant and from another which is merely holding on to life by a slender thread, starved for food and moisture, and shrivelled under a scorching sun. There are exceptions, to be sure, as in the easier forms of the cobweb (arachnoideum) group, whose protection of cobwebs permit them to thrive in depressions on limestone rocks, with little or no soil; but generally speaking, best garden effects are obtained when the plants are grown in fairly rich soil and do not suffer for moisture.

The matter of sun or shade is another controversial point in their culture, and is no doubt to be answered largely by local conditions. In this northern garden, with its sandy soil, we found that most kinds, especially those with large colored rosettes, were better for some shade. The best way to answer this question to your own satisfaction is to make trial plantings in full sun and in varying degrees of shade, as well as in rich soil, noting the reactions of the plants to the different environments. They will not tell lies!

I am of the opinion that the many statements in garden literature which tell us of the indestructible nature of sempervivums, of how they thrive on neglect, and others in a similar vein, have contributed much to the neglect of the genus. Another factor in the unfortunate chain of circumstances has been the disregard of their landscape value, due, no doubt to the regrettable practice of growing them in holes bored in kegs or barrels, which remind one of an anemic hedgehog. Others seem to think that their only place is in dish gardens, a use which may be well enough as far as it goes, but a most unnatural place for a plant which is used to the pure air of high European mountains.

Rightly placed in the garden, especially the rock garden, I know of no more important contributor of year-round interest and beauty. When the dull season overtakes one's alpine plantings, as it surely will in midsummer, the colored rosettes of many of these plants will often be the only bit of color to be found, especially if one is a Simon-pure alpinist, and eschews annuals as being unfit for his mountain plantings. And then in winter, when many of one's treasures have retreated below the ground for their long rest, the sempervivums will be there to cheer one through the dreary months.

Ways to use the plants in the garden are quite without number, making a story far too long to tell in detail here; so let us limit the remarks to a few generalities which will bring out their versatility. The kinds with small rosettes, of which Sempervivum montanum in most of its forms, S. dolo-

miticum and S. pumilum (I am following Praeger's naming as far as possible) are examples, are especially effective when planted in vertical crevices in wall or rock garden, at the top of a wall or steep slope, or on a level surface near the line of vision. There are several reasons for these arrangements which will become apparent at the first trial.

Thus, I recall a planting in this garden years ago in which S. montanum grew on the north side of the pool; planted on the very brink, it had in a few years extended its mats of small, dense, hairy rosettes at least eighteen inches down to the water level, covering a large area of the pool's cement side with a pleasing mantle of dark green. Or again: two or three plants of S. stiriacum, which is little more than montanum doubled in size of rosettes, with its leaves tipped reddish-brown, placed at the top of a perpendicular rock face, completely obliterated the stone in a few years.

According to my way of thinking, the large rosetted kinds with colored foliage, like the many varieties of S. tectorum and the plant known as rubicundum, which is a form of S. Schlehanii, are best in rich soil in part shade. There, many of them assume noble proportions and retain their rich coloring, which, incidentally, is largely lost when they are baked under the hot summer sun. Some gardeners, like the late M. Correvon, complain that they then lose "their natural character," but most will agree with the gentleman just quoted that they are "nice garden ornaments."

The kinds with cobwebs over their rosettes are the only ones that are likely to cause the gardener worry. They want perfect drainage at all times. If one is gardening on heavy soil, perhaps the best place for these high alpines is in a dry wall or vertical crevice in the rock garden. Notwithstanding the fact that they are "the most alpine of all" sempervivums, they can stand more baking than most others. That suggests, in addition to the foregoing situations, planting in depressions in rocks, even in little soil. The arachnoideum forms are reputedly lime haters, but we found in our trials that most, especially the hybrids like Fauconnettii, piliferum, pilosella, penicillatum and Mettenianum, were quite satisfied with a hole gouged out of limestones.

Considering the amount of confusion that exists in the naming of sempervivums, it is doubtful that anything of much value can be said along that line. Yet, the collector of houseleeks would be completely lost without some sort of guide. With not a little trepidation, then, and a fervent prayer, I shall try to give my interpretation of the names most often met with in gardens.

Sempervivum tectorum covers a vast amount of material, ranging all the way from a large, all-green form, which is probably true tectorum, to the tiny one known in gardens as S. minutum. The ones that please me most are: A form with medium rosettes and year-round red leaves, known in gardens as tectorum rubicubdum (not true rubicundum, of course, for that is a synonym or a form of S. Schlehanii; S. calcareum (incorrectly listed as S. californicum by some growers), with lovely jade-green rosettes, each leaf tipped conspicuously with brownish-purple (a diminutive form of calcareum, which we once had under label of S. greeni is a lovely landscape houseleek and a rare one, for I have not been able to find it again); juratense, large rosettes of red-brown and green; Lamotti, a large, showy one with green leaves, tipped red; Robustum, a spectacular plant, each large leaf being glaucous-purple at the base, then red, and ending in green; and S. triste, which Praeger does not mention, appears to be a small tectorum with deep red leaves.

The kinds with small or medium-sized rosettes are my favorites for landscape use. Among them are S. Montanum, which was mentioned before, and its form Braunii, a whitish-flowered form of the violet-purple type; Burnatii (a large montanum); pallidum (large rosettes with red-brown edges on leaves); flagelliforme (small rosettes, spread around the parent on very long stolons), and stiriacum (described before).

The marriage of montanum and tectorum has given us several children, including S. rhaeticum with rosettes a little larger than montanum, quite tomentose leaves, and a tuft of white hairs at each leaf-tip. Another marriage of montanum, this time with S. Wulfenii, produced three or four children that are nice to have around. Here, we liked the one called Huteri very well, because of his fuzzy, wide-spread leaves, though the one known in gardens as Theobaldii, which shows its parentage in about 50-50 proportion, is not far behind.

Two more with medium-size rosettes should be mentioned before closing these remarks. One, S. funkii, which is said to be a triple hybrid, is a most pleasing little waif, clothing any unconsidered spot with a mantle of small, green rosettes — not especially showy, but always on his good behavior, and always presentable. Little need be said about the other, S. soboliferum, the plant from which the common name, hen-and-chicken, came. For its associations and for its habit of the chicks rolling away and taking root wherever they stop, it should be in every collection. But it also has definite landscape value which will repay for the space it takes. There are at least three forms in gardens, differing only in size of rosette, and running all the way from an inch across to one that is four inches or more.

The cobwebs are all fascinating, delighting even the jaded gardener with their simulation of a spider's industry. Here, too, we find much variation, for the plant has not only changed its shape, size and amount of silky raiment as it wandered over the mountains of Europe, but it has taken several mates during its travels, and their children are as charming as the parents. No cobweb that you can get will fail to please you, be it type arachnoideum, with half-inch, dense rosettes; tomentosum, with flat rosettes that are quite hidden under a dense, white web; Hookeri, a very small, neat form; or any of the ones mentioned in a previous paragraph.

To sum up in one sentence this gardener's impression of sempervivums: They can easily be made the most absorbing experience in one's gardening life.

MacPherson Gardens
2920 STARR AVE. TOLEDO 5, OHIO

RUBRUM
SILVERINE
TRISTE

KAPAONIKENSE (C)
SPINOSA
A. STANSFIELSI

ALPHA
No. 15
PETTONII

LIBRARY
RECEIVED
★ JAN 23 1961 ★
U. S. Department of Agriculture

ATROVIOLACEUM
DEZERMIT
SIMONKAIANUM

CLUSIANNA
ELEGANS
ALLIONII

H.CELON
CLARA NOYES
LOWN'S 60

LIBRARY
RECEIVED
★ JAN 23 1961
U. S. Department of Agriculture

REGINAE-AMALIAE
SEIBENBERGEN
POWELLII
PURDY'S 90-1
ARENARIUM
MAUVINE
RUBICUNDUM
CILIOSUM
METTENIANUM

LIBRARY
RECEIVED
★ JAN 2 3 1961
U. S. Department of Agriculture

SOBOLIFERUM (C)
PURDY'S 60-1
ARACHNOIDEUM

PURPLE BEAUTY
A. WEBBIANUM (C)
ATROPURPUREUM

No. 10
GAMMA
CALCAREUM

LIBRARY
RECEIVED
★ JAN 23 1961 ★
U. S. Department of Agriculture